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Letter from the EDITOR

ELANOR TRAVERS (HAIR) AND ERIN FULLER (MAKE UP), GINA CONWAY PRIVÉ; GINACONWAYPRIVE.COM. PHOTO BY TOM DUNKLEY

True story. The other week I was sitting on the train in a right mood. It was dark outside, rain was pummelling on the windows, people around me were either sneezeing or coughing, and it was a Monday. And then I read Rachel Mantock's interview with Yinka Ilori and wonderfully, all was good with the world.

You see, Ilori has such a positive outlook on life and designs beautiful chairs that just throw colour at you. Take a look at page 28 and you will see why this Islington born and bred designer transformed my mundane Monday.

There's actually plenty of design inspiration throughout this month's pages. As our cover image alludes to, we have a kitchen special this month as Kara O'Reilly looks at the people behind some of the best designs out there right now. Taking things even further, you've just got to see PLP Architecture's stunning plans for the Barbican. It's a 300 metre, 80 storey concept that will stand out on the London skyline – and it's made of timber. Baffled? Read more from page 24.

Bringing us all back to earth, in a good way it has to be said, is this month's lead profile Mark Gatiss. Long-term readers will know this isn't the first time we've had the Islington local within these pages, but the guy is just so damn talented that there is always something to write about, whether it's writing award-winning scripts for *Sherlock* or being involved in dark comedy matters with his fellow *League of Gentlemen*. He's currently having us rolling in the aisles at Park Theatre, the perfect antidote to any dreary day. Enjoy the issue – and smile.

Mark Kebble, Editor

HOUSE *to* HOME

Design Director of LLI Design, Linda Levine tells us how she made two large apartments into one stunning modern home

Words RACHEL MANTOCK

How this Islington property was transformed from apartments into a stunning home

Watching TIME

The innovators behind The Camden Watch Co. are giving the staple accessory an industrial edge

Words RACHEL MANTOCK

Classic looks courtesy of The Camden Watch Co.

VINTAGE COCKTAIL CLUB

Set in the Dickensian area of Cheapside, The Four Sisters Townhouse is honouring its legacy with a classic cocktail offering

Words RACHEL MANTOCK

Embracing history (and cocktails) at The Four Sisters Townhouse

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{THE FINEST EVENTS IN LONDON THIS MONTH}

REMEMBER, REMEMBER

Celebrate Guy Fawkes at Clissold Park's dazzling firework show

Stoke Newington will hold a spectacular display of sparkling fireworks, shooting across the dark sky like glitter shot out of cannons. Dubbed a 'pyromusical', artistic displays that explode across the sky and soundtrack classics will combine to bring you an evening of festive fun. A children's fun fair, street performers, a multitude of street food vendors and a creative themed firework show will all feature, lighting up the sky and the atmosphere. The fireworks will begin at 7pm followed by a huge bonfire.

Green Lanes N16 9HJ; 020 8356 8428; visit eventbrite.co.uk for tickets

GRAND DESIGNS

A coffee cup for astronauts, the David Bowie Blackstar album cover and a sexual health testing kit... Opening 24 November, Beazley Designs of the Year will form part of the opening programme of exhibitions at the Design Museum's new home on Kensington High Street. Comprising over 70 nominations, the exhibition celebrates the best designs from around the world.
020 3862 5900;
designmuseum.org

Harbin Opera Grand Theater Lobby, China

Raise the dead

Wahaca will once again be behind a three-day agave-fuelled fiesta in celebration of Mexico's favourite festival, Day of the Dead. From 3-5 November, The Vaults in Waterloo will be transformed into a den of Mexican festivities with three nights of live music and art, hedonistic performance, street food and tequila, showcasing the best of Modern Mexican culture.

Leake Street SE1 7NN; wahacaDOTD.co.uk

Night of debauchery

Dominic Cooper stars in Stephen Jeffreys' sexually charged masterpiece *The Libertine*, being staged at the Theatre Royal Haymarket until 3 December. John Wilmot, the second Earl of Rochester, is a charismatic poet, playwright and rake with a legendary appetite for excess. Yet this most ardent of hedonists is forced to reconsider everything he thinks and feels when a chance encounter with an actress sends him reeling.

Haymarket SW1Y 4HT; 020 7930 8800; trh.co.uk

JOHAN PERSSON; PATRICK DEMARCHELIER

HAIR RAISER

Opening on 2 November, Somerset House is proud to present Hair by Sam McKnight, a major exhibition celebrating the master hair stylist's remarkable 40-year career. An integral part of the fashion industry, McKnight has been instrumental in helping to develop the images of Kate Moss, Linda Evangelista, Christy Turlington, Naomi Campbell, Princess Diana and many more.
Embankment Galleries, Somerset House WC2R 1LA; somersethouse.org.uk

Portrait of a master
Pablo Picasso's portraits epitomise the astonishing variety and innovation of his art. This major exhibition of over 80 works focuses on the artist's portrayal of family, friends and lovers, and reveals his creative processes as he moved freely between drawing from life, humorous caricature and expressive painting from memory.
Exhibition runs until 5 February, 2017.
St Martin's Place WC2H 0HE;
020 7306 0055; npg.org.uk

AS NATURE INTENDED

The Natural History Museum invites you to follow a 565 million year journey through the eyes of nature. Uncover how vision first evolved and how colour in animals suddenly became the difference between life and death.
Colour and Vision, until 6 November; nhm.ac.uk

CONTINENTAL SHIFT

Themes & Variations presents *Seeking Africa: Design/Art Across a Continent,* the first exhibition in the UK to focus on the rich variety of contemporary design from Africa. The rise of individual visions, evolving into a stronger communal voice, is explored in the exhibition that opens on 16 November and runs until 16 December.
231 Westbourne Grove W11 2SE; 020 7727 5531; themesandvariations.com

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ROSIE MILLARD

Here's the question: how Islington are you?

And so, as the nights are closing in and everything is very cosy indoors, The Angel Resident would like to give you a short quiz on which you can test your very Islingtonness. Are you the soul of Jezza or are you the spirit of Bozza? Or are you neither, but the yummiest of all mummies? Curl up in front of your Aga, or groovy halogen heater, and read on… Answers at the bottom.

Take Rosie's quiz to determine what type of local you are

1 Your weekly shop is at...
a) Waitrose.
b) William Tyndale Farmer's Market.
c) You have a home delivery from Hubbub, because it manages to get cheese from The Fromagerie and fish from lovely Steve Hatt.

2 Your children are educated at...
a) The Hall, it's a drive away but so worth it.
b) They walk to Canonbury Primary each morning.
c) Dallington. Boho and we love it.

3 You own a dog. It's a...
a) Labrador. Only a proper dog will do.
b) A rescue dog, a terrier of some sort.
c) Poppy, our Springer Spaniel.

4 Where do you have a regular coffee?
a) You grab a quick espresso at that cart by Angel tube which plays opera.
b) CoffeeWorks, which sells authentic FairTrade beans.
c) Ottolenghi, if you can get the buggy in.

ROSIE LOVES

Harold and Leslie, Cally Road. Brilliant haircuts, now coffee, antiques and, following the arrival of a licence, BOOZE!

5 What sort of transport do you use?
a) BMW. Parked at the Hilton's underground gaff.
b) Ancient Claude racer.
c) Zip car. Or Uber.

6 Favourite Islington diner?
a) Bellanger. It's about time we had a place with a decent wine list in Islington.
b) I volunteer at the Hare Krishna soup kitchen on York Way.
c) Sunday, at the top of Hemingford Road. Fab brunches.

7 Speaking of Sundays, what do you do on them?
a) Lie in bed reading FT Weekend.
b) Voluntarily pick up rubbish in Highbury Fields.
c) Take the kids to trombone, then Mandarin, then Kumon tuition.

8 Where do you buy your books?
a) I make a pilgrimage to Daunt's on Marylebone High Street.
b) Housman's. The only proper left wing independent bookshop left in London, it's at the bottom of the Cally.
c) School book fair. We all love Michael Rosen!

9 Where do you keep fit?
a) I do a Boot Camp every Thursday night at the Virgin Active. Very sweaty!
b) I cycle to Hampstead Heath every morning and swim in the Mixed Pond.
c) Dax Moy is my personal trainer.

10 Who is your local hero?
a) I've always had a soft spot for Tony Blair.
b) Lenin. He stayed at 16 Percy Circus for a few months in 1905.
c) Dinny Hall. Her eternity rings are divine.

11 Your absolute fave place in N1 is...
a) That cocktail bar on Colebrooke Row.
b) The Memorial to the Tolpuddle Martyrs at the Clock Tower, Market Road. Thousands gathered there in 1834 in order to march in memory of the Martyrs who were sent off to Australia for forming a trade union.
c) My children's nursery.

You answered mostly:
a) A relative newcomer to Islington, you inhabit the spirit of Boris Johnson. Do you possibly work in the city?
b) You are basically Jeremy Corbyn.
c) An Islington yummy parent, yours are the demands around which the myriad businesses of the borough and all the shops on Upper Street succeed or fail.

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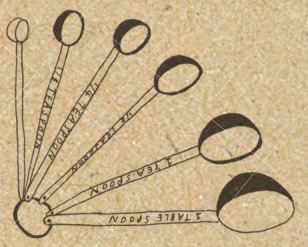

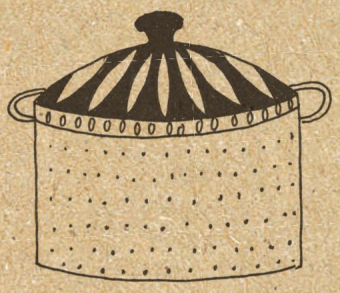

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RECOMMENDS

Head into winter in style with these on trend local buys

1 STEAMPUNK

Steampunk returned to the catwalks with a vengeance this season, making a statement with dark, gothic clothing. Designers drew inspiration from Victorian Britain, mixing things up with tweed and denim. Reiss's Honne Stud Biker Leather Jacket nails this look while still retaining a classic look. Team it with Chelsea boots and a woollen jumper for timeless winter style that has a touch of 19th century cyberpunk.
30 Islington Green N1 8DU; 020 7226 9632; reiss.com

2 LUXE VELVET

Double velvet outfits are all the rage, with crushed velvet bags and cigarette trousers in royal colours taking over. Bringing the dark evening trend into the modern day meant infusing it with bright yellows and vibrant purples, making it ideal for winter daytime as well as nights. Take your style cues from Valentino and grab your own piece of the velvet action with these Dr Martens bold statement, navy velvet brogues, each shoe embossed with intricate patterns for that extra bit of detailing, modelled off an old fabric card for Victorian curtains: lavish, fun and dramatic.
15 Lamb Street E1 6EA; 020 7377 5963; drmartens.com

3 BLOCK STRIPES

This winter, minimalism is on its way out, with bold, colourful stripes taking its place. Keep cosy with this kimono block stripe jumper from Islington's Toast clothing store. It's made out of feathery traditionally spun lamb's wool and features dropped shoulders for a more loose fitted look. Toast stocks a range of contemporary, refined loungewear and knitwear, perfect for winter months when combining style with warmth is essential.
133 Upper Street N1 1QP; 0207 704 8243; toast.uk

4 CAT MANIA

From leopard prints and 3D cat bags, to cat motif embroidery and fluffy kitten necklaces, social media's obsession with all things feline has made its way to the high street. Lulu Guinness's Kooky Cat Perspex Orb Clutch approaches this trend in a playful way, with a sphere shape and big cartoon cat eyes. Grab yours at their Threadneedle Street store where you'll also find Guinness's full range of cat inspired accessories on offer.
23 Royal Exchange, Threadneedle Street EC3V 3LR; 020 7626 5391; luluguinness.com

5 GRANNY CHIC

Patterned silk head scarves, oversized glasses and long skirts with busy prints dominated the London catwalks for autumn/winter 2016. Everyone from Mary Katrantzou, Sibling and Margiela to Chanel are channelling 'Granny's great adventure' this winter. Get the look with this bold print dress by Diane von Furstenberg from luxury boutique, Precious, by pairing it with an oversized wool cardigan.
16 Artillery Passage E1 7LJ; 020 7377 6668; precious-london.com

POWER *of* PERFORMANCE

Currently on stage at Park Theatre, Islington resident Mark Gatiss discusses his character Harold, Doctor Who and the popularity of Sherlock

Words RACHEL MANTOCK

The cast of *The Boys in the Band*

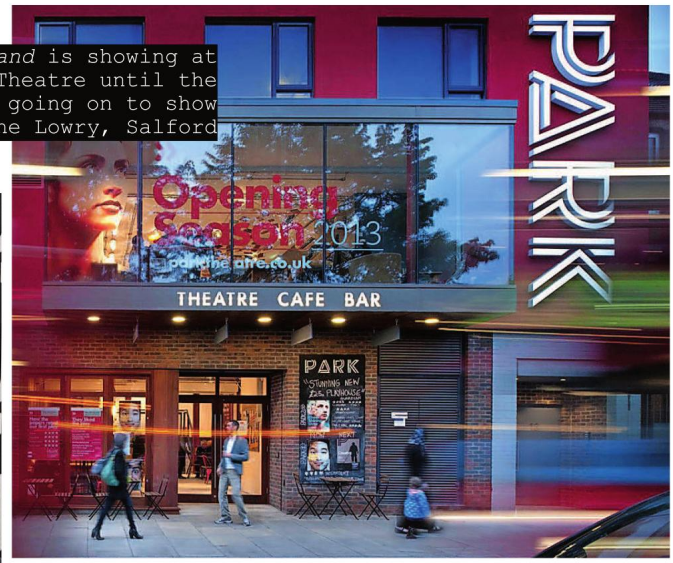
Renowned for his acting and witty screenwriting, including his involvement in the acclaimed *Sherlock* series, Mark Gatiss is currently starring in the first major production of Mart Crowley's play, *The Boys in the Band*, as the sharp and satirical Harold. Describing his character and considering how he differs from his former roles, Gatiss says: 'He's a very acerbic, acidic, funny man with a rather sad core. I've never played any former ice skaters before! It's a great part in a great play that's funny, nasty, melancholy and challenging.'

He reveals that he first saw the play when he was about 12 years old and it had a profound, lasting effect on him. 'It changed my life as it's a very unflinching depiction of homosexuality, very controversial in its day and particularly in the years following,' he explains. 'I wanted to do this for precisely that reason. It's such an interesting piece historically and, even now, it still has an awful lot to say.'

It's a timely reminder of how good an actor he is, particularly considering it's his writing that has been garnering all the praise recently. Co-creating the *Sherlock* TV series with fellow *Doctor Who* screenwriter Steven Moffat has been a deeply rewarding experience for ›

Gatiss plays the character of Mycroft in his popular detective series

The Boys in the Band is showing at North London's Park Theatre until the end of October, before going on to show at The Lowry, Salford



Gatiss with *Sherlock* co-producer and long term friend, Steven Moffat, right

I put arse to chair, pen to paper. And then I stare at a blank sheet until my forehead bleeds

them both, with the fourth series currently in production, slated for a 2017 release. Nominated for multiple BAFTA, Emmy and Golden Globe prizes, the show won in three categories at the 66th Primetime Emmy Awards, including the 'Outstanding Lead Actor' sub section, where Benedict Cumberbatch was honoured for his clever and compelling performance as Sherlock Holmes.

'Moffat and I both loved *Sherlock Holmes* and on one particular train journey it occurred to me that in the very first Conan Doyle story, Dr Watson is invalided home from war service in Afghanistan and we thought, "why don't we just do it again in the modern day?" So that's how it all began.'

Gatiss has been intrigued by *Doctor Who* since he was a child and dedicated a great deal of his early writing career to producing remarkable pieces for the series. It's no wonder, then, that his favourite piece of screenwriting to date was part of a *Doctor Who* project. 'My favourite piece is *An Adventure in Space and Time*, which is the story of how *Doctor Who* began,' he says. 'I wrote it a few years ago for the show's 50th anniversary. Writing that was one of my happiest experiences.'

When asked if he found writing for a show as complex as *Doctor Who* difficult, he explains that although the show appears to be 'crazy and something in which anything goes', he loves doing it regardless. 'It's quite rigorous as far as a story that has to be told in 45 minutes goes,' he adds.

With a deep rooted love of all things film, TV and theatre, if he had to choose one right now, it would be the latter. Referring to being part of the cast of *The Boys in the Band* in particular, he says: 'Film, TV or theatre? I love them all, but it's particularly thrilling to get in front of an audience and have a different reaction and a different audience every night.'

Gatiss turns a well known figure of speech on its head, as a jack of all trades and master of all, his multifaceted talents constantly complement and strengthen each other. 'Having a knack for acting and writing both helps one with the other very much,' he considers. 'I get to write a lot of my own stuff, which is terrific. It means I don't really have to wait for the phone to ring. I can also change a lot of the lines, because I wrote them originally! In terms of writing for other people, it helps that I am also an actor because I can use my ear for dialect and speech patterns to write for others effectively.'

'The key is to just write, carry on and see what happens,' he continues. 'No-one will judge unless you want them to, and don't give up. The same advice goes for actors, but they need a lot more luck.' Of his own creative process, he jokes: 'I put arse to chair, pen to paper. And then I stare at a blank sheet until my forehead bleeds.'

For Gatiss, an Islington resident, London remains 'a great centre of theatres, perhaps the greatest'. He notes the range of things you can see on any given night and the vibrancy of different styles, from huge West End musicals to intimate fringe shows and experimental theatre. 'I love it because it's the home of theatre and remains unchanged. It's bold and groundbreaking, with a great tradition and history rooted at its core.' A tradition that he hopes *The Boys in the Band* will become a part of, perfectly placed among an array of dazzling performances that captivate their audiences.

For more details on *The Boys in the Band* call 020 7870 6876 or visit parktheatre.co.uk

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Watching TIME

The innovators behind The Camden Watch Co. are giving the staple accessory an industrial edge

Words RACHEL MANTOCK

Couple Anneke Short and Jerome Robert are the brains behind a historic Camden inspired watch company that captures the balance between high end and unpretentious tastefulness perfectly. Both with backgrounds in luxury Swiss watch design, together they have brought their expertise to the flamboyant area, creating charming, industrial style watches with the same level of attention to detail as a Swiss watch would command. Short explains: 'There are a lot of luxury elements that go into designing our watches the way we do, but the biggest is the amount of time we spend. The fashion trade is, by nature, fast moving, so designing watches usually follows suit. Luxury watches on the other hand can take months, even years to perfect, and that is the approach we take with our watch designs.'

Delving more deeply into the ins and outs of how they design their vintage style watches, she adds: 'Each element is designed, reassigned, refined and reworked until perfect and more than that, each element has a reason for being. Our designs are extremely detailed, from the "C" on the crown to the story behind each watch that is featured on its vintage style packaging.'

The Camden Watch Co. has a strong

The couple behind The Camden Watch Co. believe trying to follow trends is futile

affinity with Camden's industrial past, with many watches being named after bus or train routes. Both Short and Robert were drawn to the creative Camden area. Robert says: 'There is a lot to love about Camden. It's vibrant, dynamic, open minded and it has a really rich cultural heritage to boot. We bring in the industrial element through a lot of small, subtle details, such as brushed metals, railway studs and brown paper tied up with string.'

Their flagship boutique sits Tardis like, tucked away in Stables Market. Inside, the space suddenly feels bigger, each watch preciously displayed along the walls with intricate details and Camden's history dotted all around. They have recently rolled out a range of special edition watches, inspired by the Northern Line and the Grade II listed Horse Hospital.

'Our special editions are a small batch that draw their inspiration from specific locations. The Northern Line edition is clad in black, with gold and purple detailing, whereas the other is our Horse Hospital watch, exclusively available in our Camden store only,' explains Robert. 'These are both produced in very small quantities, once a year, so are very hard to come by. We are launching our first ever Limited Edition watch for Christmas and we can't wait.

It's worth keeping tabs on the Limited Edition's release as they'll be gone soon after they go on sale, meaning you'd miss out on the perfect, old school British gentleman style gift. With navigational routes featuring heavily in many of The Camden Watch Co.'s designs, the area's trade and vehicle history was the sparking power behind the conception of this quirky watch brand. Most of the pieces are cleverly named after bus routes that run through Camden, such as the 29, the 88, the 253 and the 24. The 24, specifically, is the longest running unchanged bus route in London. Short describes their approach to naming their eclectic designs as 'just a bit of fun', an added detail and a nod to the fantastic place that inspires their industrial brand.

Camden was once a bustling distribution hub for the whole of the British Empire

›

The Camden Watch Co. fuses Swiss engineering elements with historic British design influences

'On top of that, Camden was once a bustling distribution hub for the whole of the British Empire, a place to receive stock goods before sending them off all over England by canal boat and railway.'

When it comes to sustainability, The Camden Watch Co. focus their approach on the quality, long lasting nature of their products, by default creating less need for reproduction, and therefore keeping energy consumption at a minimum. With a range of automatics and pop up store plans in the pipeline, 2017 is set to be a big year for Short and Robert, though the specifics are shrouded in mysterious secrecy for now.

With large faced, rose gold watches having dominated the scene for some time now, when asked what watch trends they predict will take hold over the next year, Short tells me that 'they are not really the sort of brand to follow trends', making their experimental, determined-to-stand-out type flair even more obvious. She says: 'I've tried to follow watch trends before and you just end up chasing your own tail. Trends are cyclical, so they will always repeat themselves with slight modifications. Instead, we try to create great looking pieces that are designed with passion and most importantly, built to last.'

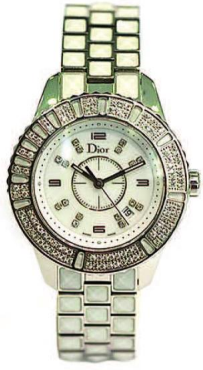
Thoughtfully, she adds: 'I think it was Yves Saint Laurent that said, "fashion fades but style is eternal",' before Robert continues, 'If we happen to design a watch that fits a certain trend du jour, then that's fine, but it will be by chance. There are enough watch brands out there all doing the same thing, so why should we be another among many? Why not try to be different?'

And tried to be different they have, succeeding in producing a quintessentially London brand that has interlinked itself perfectly with the city's rich industrial past and strong heritage, achieving a look that will be popular for years to come. With the hectic festive shopping season upon us, why not give a loved one a slice of the past? Or just treat yourself to a classic watch that quietly stands out from the crowd.

Find out more about The Camden Watch Co. at camdenwatchcompany.com

LOCAL STATEMENT WATCH BUYS

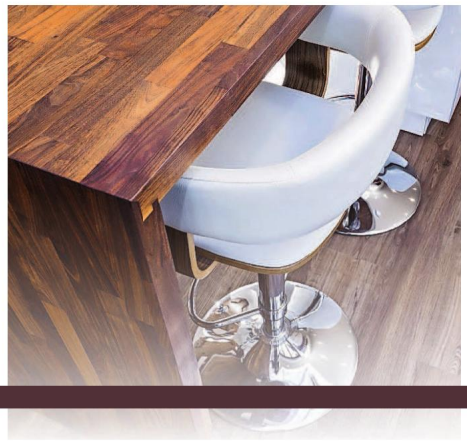
GOLDEN & REFINED
D42 Brass with Black Leather Strap by Leff Amsterdam from Aria, £149, Barnsbury Hall, Barnsbury Street N1 1PN; 020 7704 6222; ariashop.co.uk

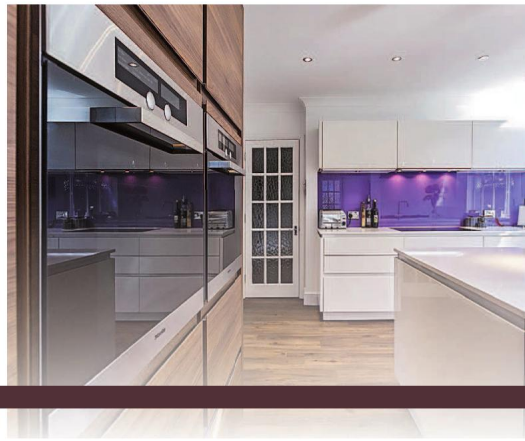


MADE FOR ROYALTY
Christian Dior Christal Diamond Set Ceramic Watch from CARR, £1,500, 53 Liverpool Street EC2M 7QN; 020 7220 7755; carrwatches.com

GO DIGITAL
Extra Normal Digital Grande from twentytwentyone, £150, 274 - 275 Upper Street London N1 2UA; 020 7288 1996 twentytwentyone.com

CONCEPT KITCHENS





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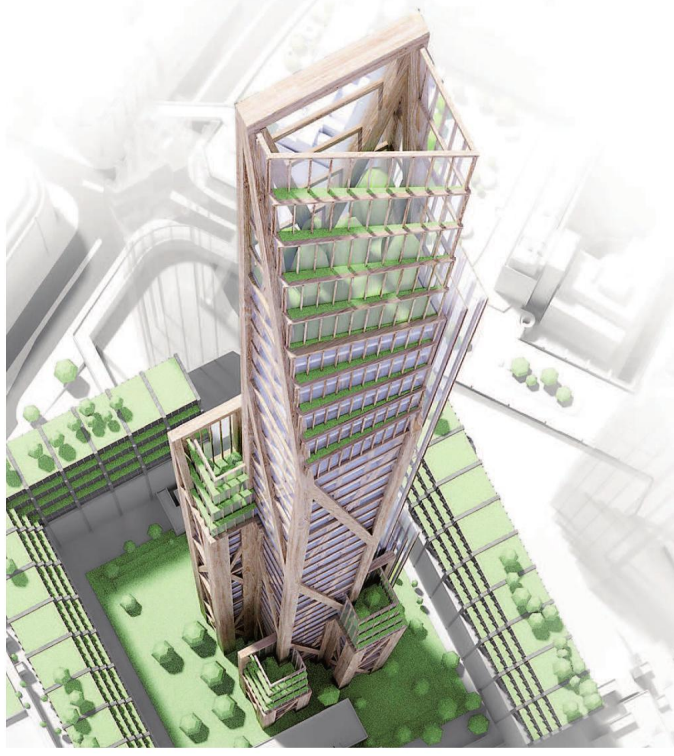
The proposed Timber Tower will soar above the Barbican



CONCRETE JUNGLE

PLP Architecture's Kevin Flanagan tells us how their proposed timber tower will fit into Barbican's Brutalist landscape

Words RACHEL MANTOCK

The protected Barbican building is built on the site of the Roman military Garrison and the ancient walls of the former City of London, to the north. With its listed status, the Barbican will forever serve as a commanding example of historic, Brutalist architecture, with a dystopian air about it. It's a place that Londoners and tourists flock to, in awe of the dominating, colossal concrete forms that fill the skyline.

In collaboration with Cambridge University, PLP Architecture have dedicated a wealth of time, passion and resources into researching the use of timber as a main building material in high rise construction. They conducted a widespread study to test the public's response towards residential timber construction and received an overwhelmingly positive response internationally. Timber is being heralded by experts as a sustainable alternative to traditional building materials, reducing carbon emissions and lengthy construction times.

Earlier this year, this research paid off in a big way and they developed a never before seen project proposal for the Barbican housing estate. They revealed a 300 metre, 80 storey wooden skyscraper concept, named The Oakwood Timber Tower, the first of its kind in London and are now in talks with the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, about making it a real existing structure. When asked about just how sustainable this building would be, the lead architect of the project, Kevin Flanagan, says: 'Preparing timber and using it to build has a very low impact on the environment and promotes healthy woodland management. Cross laminated timber modular panels can often be built in a third of the time, with far fewer hands and significantly less noise than concrete elements can.' ›

The Oakwood Timber Tower would stand in stark contrast to Barbican's existing residential buildings

He also points out the benefits of using materials that weigh less than typical concrete and steel combinations, stating: 'A timber building by nature is very light, requiring less deep foundations. This means that they are ideal for sites that sit on top of underground infrastructure such as tunnels that are very common in big cities.'

While PLP are staying tight lipped about just how close they are to making this fascinating idea a reality, Flanagan keeps our hopes high by reminding us that the timber building concept is a craze that is sweeping not only this city, but the globe, and with every new project that is successfully completed, a positive knock on effect is felt in capitals around the world. Australia has recently modified legislation to encourage large timber structures, while Europe is generally ahead of the game with wooden building works of art popping up everywhere, such as OPPEAA's Finlandia award winning Puukuokka apartment building and CF Moller's proposed 'woodscraper' for Stockholm.

'Behavioural science suggests that being surrounded by a natural material such as timber helps people to relax and improves their sense of wellbeing,' explains Flanagan. 'Is that not what we want to give the next generation? It brings about a sense of children playing in trees under a protective canopy of dappled light. We intrinsically have an affinity with nature and wood.'

For the experimental architect, Barbican, just as its name suggest is 'a bulwark against urban living, the ultimate expression of the famed optimism of the 1954 Festival of Britain, a new concept of urban living. It was a social experiment with concrete, along with a little Thunderbirds Futurist fun thrown in as a winter garden'.

Barbican is the ultimate expression of the famed optimism of the 1954 Festival of Britain

It's the areas strong association with urban social responsibility that lead PLP to choose it as the site for their proposed design. Flanagan says they wanted to reinvent the Barbican and to give it 'a renewed sense of purpose', as well as tapping into the notion of residential co-living. He says: 'We want to create a shared co-living space for 700 residents within the tower. This is the future for the next generation of young intrepid aspiring innovators that will be the driving force behind the economy post Brexit.'

It's only a matter of time before the wooden tower trend explodes on to the London scene. PLP Architecture has an enviable portfolio of projects behind them, rivalled by none. Their huge 'Nexus' building concept for China, composed of three rotated, interlocking volumes will revolutionise Shenzhen's Pearl River Delta if it goes ahead, while their tall timber building research was shortlisted for various awards, cementing their position as global leaders in the construction world. For Flanagan, the recent popularity of concrete as an interiors trend is rooted in people's flirtations with the past, the move towards wooden construction a symbol of people's gravitation towards the future, the two co-existing harmoniously together. He wants The Oakwood Timber Tower to be something that when seen from afar, will stand as a glowing symbol of the heart of London, promising a new day.

Find out more at plparchitecture.com

Bring revived brutalism into your home...

Concrete Dressing Table by Jimmy Delatour, POA, delatourdesignlab.com

Whorl Table by Neal Aronowitz, £9,200, pamono.co.uk

Modern Muskoka Chair, from £1,570, hard-goods.com

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A GAME *of* THRONES

Having made a big splash on the scene, chair designer Yinka Ilori tells us how faith and West African heritage inspire his colourful designs

Words RACHEL MANTOCK

The talented designer has a global collector base

Sat in a tiny, snug coffee shop filled with tastefully weathered furniture by Stamford Brook Station, chair designer of the moment Yinka Ilori sits across from me thoughtfully taking in his menu options. Astonishingly down to earth with not even a trace of art world pretentiousness, something that he will later come to tell me he hates, you would never guess that by day he continually turns the design scene on its head with his cool up cycled furniture.

Thinking about the root of his creativity, Ilori describes his upbringing as religious, having been raised in the Anglican Church. He jokes: 'I don't go to church as much anymore because I don't have anyone saying "It's Sunday, it's 11 o clock, get up", but it has really influenced the way I design and think creatively, as it was such a big part of my childhood.'

Bold colour and Dutch wax prints dominate Ilori's designs

His bold chair designs each have a story to tell, with symbolic elements of hope, prosperity and miracles woven into them, inspired by Ilori's experiences as a young boy. His most recent exhibition, A Swimming Pool of Dreams, inspired by his nostalgia for sunny coastal beach visits, reminiscent of trips he used to take as a child, took place in Clerkenwell as part of the Design Undefined show, featuring six brand new quirky chairs.

Most notably, his chairs all carry his signature stamp, a concoction of vibrant contrasting colours and patterns that resemble traditional Nigerian attire, something that has been a part of Ilori's cultural fabric forever, bringing about feelings of happiness and pride. He was commissioned to design 60 chairs for Milan Design Week a year ago, at the last minute. So stunned by this fantastic opportunity, he said yes before considering the impossible time constraints. But he soon came up with a creative solution.

'I had a moment of weakness and just thought, it's too much, I can't do it,' he admits. 'In the end, I did a workshop instead, called The Art of Storytelling. The idea was, you bring your own chair in and design it, drawing inspiration from parables, as I do with traditional Nigerian parables. The whole project happened by accident, but the most rewarding things often happen that way.'

Existing as one piece of the African

Diaspora, he brings a new type of thinking to design, a wonderful fusing of Nigerian and British culture woven together with his innate knack for seeing art where others don't. His discerning eye is the reason he can turn trash into treasure, skilfully crafted chairs rising from the carcass of something someone threw away.

Flying back and forth between Nigeria and the UK often, he's constantly stunned by the wealth of design talent in the former, and more so everyone's indifference to it. He says: 'People on the streets will just whip up these amazing handmade sculptures and no one thinks anything of it.'

With the design scene now being more globally connected than ever before, the talented designer has big hopes for the future when it comes to the relationship between the London and Nigerian art scenes, noting grime artist, Skepta as an inspiring example of a British born Nigerian who defied all odds, having recently been awarded the acclaimed Mercury Prize.

A university project titled 'Our Chair' sparked Ilori's creative design journey

Sustainability is quickly becoming a more pressing matter within design circles and Ilori is among the majority that are exhausted with the city's throwaway culture. He says: 'Old furniture always has a narrative, if something is still in decent shape after 50 years, surely that speaks to its great craftsmanship.'

Having grown up in what is now one of the world's richest design hubs, the Islington born designer is extremely pleased about the area's regeneration throughout the years and tells me of a time when the area was overrun with gangs, which is hard to imagine walking down Upper Street today. Just like those he admires, he has defied all odds to become a 21st century innovator and influencer. And like the parables he's so fond of, he's teaching the next generation a lesson in modern artistic expression.

Find out more at yinkailori.com

The whole project happened by accident, but the most rewarding things often happen that way

HOUSE *to* HOME

Design Director of LLI Design, Linda Levene, explains how she made two large apartments into one stunning modern home

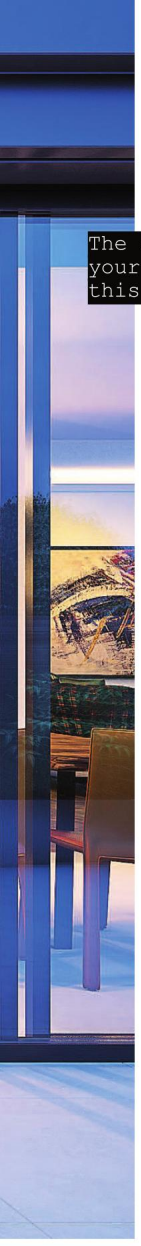
Words RACHEL MANTOCK

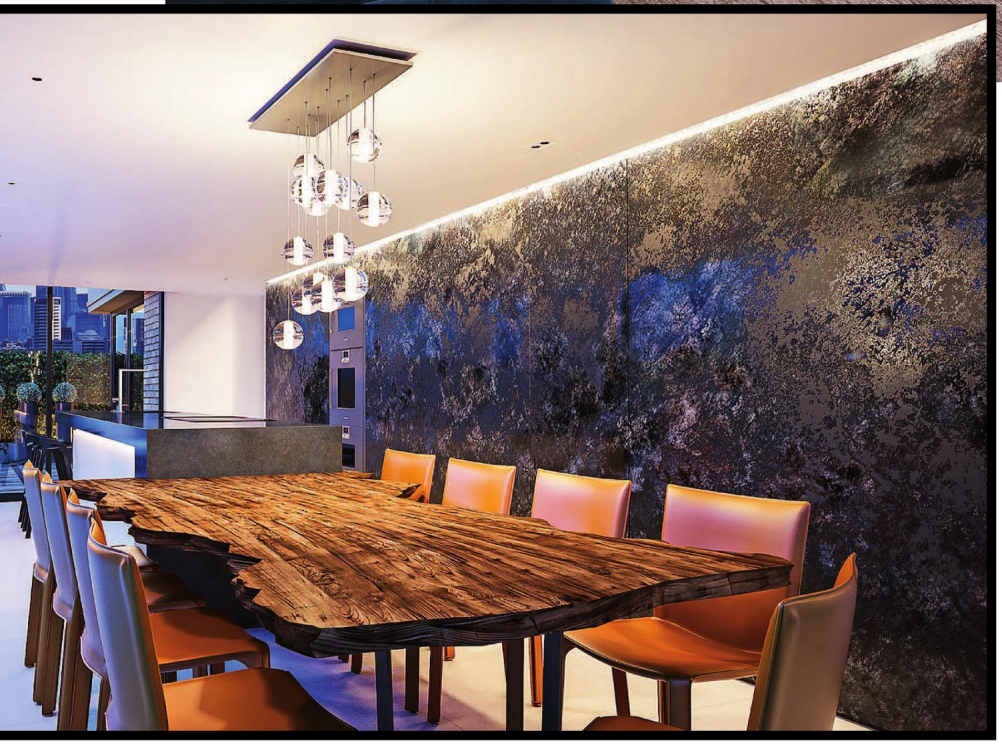
Head of N6 interior design consultancy LLI Design, Linda Levene tells me that she thinks a feather light touch is key to creating someone a home that is truly theirs. She says that the market has changed significantly, leaving individuals confident in their own tastes, not wanting an interior designer to come along and completely take over. 'All designers will tell you that they design for the client – they don't,' she explains. 'Everybody has their own handwriting that comes through, a signature style. I meet so many people who say "I don't want it to look as though a designer has been here", that's their major fear, but obviously they still need the design direction. They want something that 100 per cent reflects their lifestyle and they want it to be quite low key.'

Just like a fairy godmother, she adds: 'A designer has done her job well if other people walk in and say "fantastic, it's so you," a designer hasn't done their job well if people walk in and say "fantastic, who did it for you?" I try to have a very light touch, you mustn't feel that I have been there.'

For Levene, making the design all about the clients doesn't necessarily mean big, bold wacky statement designs, but could simply be something ultra conservative and neutral with luxury

The dramatic black wall focuses your attention on the furniture in this luxury penthouse





touches here and there. This approach is evident in a recent Hampstead project, where two penthouses were knocked into one, producing a 'huge horseshoe of an apartment with a very contemporary design'. Walls came down and were rebuilt to completely reconfigure the interior layout, before a luscious black, marble like plaster was put up, completely covering the back wall of the kitchen as a dark, earthy backdrop for the artisan dining table, made from a piece of wood that had been under water for many years, producing a tantalising effect and texture. Levene explains: 'There was so much light due to how high up the property was, we needed something to just anchor it all, and the black wall did this perfectly.'

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Asian influences can be seen throughout the apartment

She played with the space, tweaking the indoor light flow here and there, creating a sense of expansive space, without making the property feel cold, empty and almost too big. Her clients' children had grown up and moved away and this project was about designing themselves a home that was completely about them as two people. The master bedroom is full of neutral and dark tones, the essence of the room carrying strong Asian influences, along with a distinctive art piece above the bed. The living room was painted white with bold, red and green check fabrics, a three drop gold pendant light and a huge, vibrant art piece as a focal point, all splashed against seamless, contemporary grey furniture, such as the coffee table.

When asked how she understands her clients, Levene says that it is all about taking the time to really get a feel for their preferences, using images to help. 'Most clients can show you what they like on Pinterest, but a lot of them can't actually articulate that into words,' she says. 'These particular clients had lived in Hong Kong for a number of years and they were coming back to London. Some of the most important design details pop up randomly in conversation as a passing comment. You sometimes find that what you originally wanted isn't what you actually want at all. People often do an 180 degree turn.'

I try to have a very light touch, you mustn't feel that I have been there

LLI Design never take a piece from one project and use it again in another, a level of attention to detail that owes itself in part to Levene's start as a fashion designer. She and her husband built and designed a series of homes that received so much attention for their design aspects that Levene was swamped with people asking her to design their homes, leading her husband to suggest that perhaps this was the way forward. She speaks fondly of the early days when they designed a clever little house in King's Cross, before the area had regenerated, rightly predicting that the area would eventually thrive.

At the moment, Levene is very big on tranquil, healthier living, zoning her design of homes into sections for technology and sections without, giving clients the ability to completely unplug. With Levene at the forefront, LLI Design are creating homes for the future, perfectly attuned to nature and the client's individual needs, giving them little intricate touches here and there that solidify their house's status as a home.

Find out more about LLI Design and their residential projects at llidesign.co.uk

PUTTING *on the* GLITZ

Smart kitchens have never looked so glamorous – here's how to get the look

Story KARA O'REILLY

High concept

If you've got high ceilings, put them to good use by introducing feature lighting such as this dramatic centrepiece, which also serves as a speaker system and extractor fan. Elmar @Home kitchen in black walnut and stainless-steel, from £20,000, laurencepidgeon.com

Material benefits

Here's the hipster approach to high-end materials: playing on texture and contrast, including brushed brass, marble and reclaimed timber, for an industrial luxe feel.
Kitchen, from £20,000, bertandmay.com

At one with nature

A fantastic handle-less style kitchen with a chic and modern vibrancy, contrasting natural hues of deep green and walnut timber, with beautiful bronze and Carrara marble overlays. This style will suit any kind of home.
Ladbroke kitchen by Naked Kitchens, price on application, nakedkitchens.com

›

LINING UP

This minimal, slightly masculine look is all about straight lines, smooth finishes and a bold statement colour. Fly kitchen in stained oak veneer with Blade tall units in aluminium both by Modulnova, from £25,000, designspacelondon.com

Glass act

This open-plan kitchen is given a refined feel with the use of glass-fronted display cabinets and delicate feature lighting to make it feel less practical and more elegant. Bespoke kitchen, from £35,000, martinmoore.com

Clean finish

Y-line puts an unmistakable face on the new style of living. The range excites with its combination of form, function and ergonomics. Clean lines, handleless design and first-class materials open up plenty of scope for a new style of furnishing. Purist and brilliantly staged, this space provides just the setting for the pleasurable moments in life. Y-line kitchen range, £POA, conceptkitchensislington.co.uk

Racy green

This deVOL design is painted in an unusual, rich green bespoke hue, which beautifully off-sets the tactile brass hardware and Arabascato marble worktops.
Classic English Kitchen, from £25,000, devolkitchens.co.uk

Made to measure

One size doesn't fit all, so a truly bespoke kitchen, like this one from Mark Wilkinson, works perfectly. The worktops are Caesarstone – Dreamy Marfil, with appliances from Aga, Miele, Gaggenau and Liebherr.
Bespoke kitchen, from £40,000, mwf.com

Polished finish

This timeless kitchen has sleek modern accents in the form of complementary high-shine teardrop lampshades, a mirrored splashback and stainless-steel appliances.
Nickleby bespoke kitchen, from £35,000, humphreymunson.co.uk

POP COLOURS
These playful ceramic pendant lights have a smooth, seamless finish with a classic bell shape design. Created in Italy by the acclaimed designer, Paolo Cappello, they will add a fun burst of colour to any home. These pendants are available in stunning gold or in six different matt pastel colours: yellow, pink, red, mint green, anthracite or white.
Miniforms Kiki Pendant Light, £194, gomodern.co.uk

LIGHT IT UP

From brightly coloured pendants to origami shades and fluffy clusters, we show you how to make a statement with your lighting

Words RACHEL MANTOCK

THE CURVE
Featuring a sweeping, curvaceous design, this simple yet stand out floor lamp will add a touch of refined luxury to your bedroom or living area. The graceful curve of the nickel stand creates the illusion of a floating lampshade while also giving the impression of more space. It's available in two sizes and a variety of material finishes, including powder painted steel, and a white shantung silk, coffee brown or beige stripes for the hung lampshade.
Natuzzi Wisdom Lamp, £700, natuzzi.co.uk

SPINNING TOP
This 3D geometric lampshade features an eye-catching design, perfect for an entrance hallway or above a dining table. The paper pleats build up to create a unique shape that is covered in a striking orange. Bring clever, unusual style to any room with this light shade that is all the more intriguing once illuminated.
Zodiac Paper Lamp Shade in Goldfish Orange, £45, amara.com

CLOUDS OF FEATHERS
These floating cloud lights look as if there are fuzzy, glowing clouds floating around the room once hung and switched on. Hand covered in luxuriously soft goose feathers, these lights create a graceful yet bold statement, whimsical and fairytale like.
Aurora Vita Eos Feather Pendant Shade in White, from £59, grahamandgreen.co.uk

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Prints charming
Barneby Gates has joined the likes of other British creatives such as Thornback & Peel and St Jude's to be the latest print designers to take part in Sofa.com's Design Lab collaboration. Their two limited-edition fabrics will only be available for six months.
From £360 for the ottoman footstool; £60 for a cushion, sofa.com

ROCK CHIC CUSHIONS

I have been hankering after a Bella Freud 1970 jumper since she launched it. So you can probably imagine my unrequited joy upon discovering the cushion in Fenwick – more so when I realised it wasn't just for display purposes. Cushion, £160, from the Bella Freud shop at 49 Chiltern Street W1U 6LX; bellafreud.com

HOMES *NOTEBOOK*

Kara O'Reilly rounds up the latest in interiors

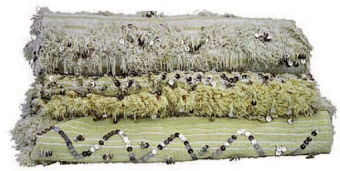
Sparkle and shine

I can't have been the only person who coveted Tord Boontje's gorgeous Blossom chandelier, unveiled years ago as part of crystal specialists Swarovski's bold Crystal Palace project. So it's good news that the brand new Atelier Swarovski Home range of accessories is launched this month at an exclusive pop-up in Selfridges. The pieces, which include candlesticks, vases and a rather eye-catching chess set, have been created by some of the same high-end design names that once featured in the Crystal Palace projects, such as Ron Arad, Frederikson Stallard and, yes, Tord Boontje.
Prices start at £250, from selfridges.com or atelierswarovskihome.com

Mini Trend
Seeing more of Moroccan wedding blankets

Sequin braided storage basket, £45, marksandspencer.com

Handwoven Moroccan sequinned pouffe/ footstool, £115, rockettstgeorge.co.uk



Moroccan wedding blankets, from £380 each, rajtentclub.com

VINTAGE COCKTAIL CLUB

Set in the Dickensian area of Cheapside, The Four Sisters Townhouse is honouring his legacy with a classic cocktail offering

Words RACHEL MANTOCK

Featuring prominently in many of Charles Dickens' novels, the area of Cheapside has a long standing connection with the iconic English writer and critic. This interwoven history sits at the core of The Four Sisters Townhouse's new branch at 5 Groveland Court, housed in a charming, historic building. Co-owner Simon Bastable explains that even little details of the bar carry intricate traces of Dickens history within them if you look closely enough. He says: 'Dickens' novels were initially serialised and published in weekly or monthly instalments, allowing Dickens to evaluate and modify his plot and character development based on his audience's reaction. In a similar fashion, the Townhouse's cocktail menu will change weekly, along with the interior of the bar, which will evolve slowly over time as its assemblage of curiosities grows.'

Special cocktails such as the Knickerbocker a la Monsieur, the Lucien Gaudin and the Ampersand are on offer at The Four Sisters Townhouse

The interior is quaint, plush and essentially Victorian; Bastable says 'it looks like the private residence of your eccentric great Aunt'. He continues: 'We wanted to achieve something that looked like the kind of place you might find in a darkly Dickensian adventure somewhere between The Old Curiosity Shop and a sumptuous Victorian gentleman's club.'

The specific location of the bar in Cheapside has a story behind it too; Groveland Court was originally the private dwelling place of the English General John Fastolf in the 14th century. Shakespeare renamed him 'Falstaff' for three of his plays, including Henry IV, Part I, Henry IV Part II and The Merry Wives of Windsor. Bastable excitedly explains: 'The court was rebuilt following the great fire of London in 1666, and for the next 100 years it was the official residence of successive Lord Mayors of London.'

Considering the area's vibrant, rich, inspiring past, one that shaped British literature and theatre, and continues to do so, he says: 'We loved the history of Groveland Court and the hidden gem feeling of the secluded location. We hope that for our guests, it's an escape from the world outside, a hidden treasure, a home away from home.'

It looks like the private residence of your eccentric great Aunt

In an area stuffed full of worthy competition, Bastable is confident his authoritative, elegant offering will stand out, saying: 'The city is very pub centric, often creating quite a masculine environment. While The Four Sisters Townhouse is by no means cutesy or even particularly feminine, it's softer and more balanced than [other pubs] just round the corner.'

London is not short of tasteful settings to grab a good pint in, but The Four Sisters Townhouse team have an edge. 'What you get at The Four Sisters Townhouse is a great service, not servitude, which is an important distinction,' notes Bastable.

Taking a more refined, involved approach to owning a high end bar, he works by the notion that 'a successful bar owner understands he is welcoming customers as if into one's own living room, hosting them as though they are invited guests'. He enjoys the symmetry of combining this idea with the history of the famous residents from Groveland Court's past, along with the fictitious Four Sisters concept, developed in veracious Dickens style.

'The bar's personality is mischievous, whimsical and honest with a sense of humour,' says Bastable, not wanting the Townhouse to become a pretentious affair. 'The purpose was to create a sense of style, substance and integrity in an environment that entertains and excites.'

Step inside as if you are stepping into Dickens' world, a landscape made up of iconic jilted old ladies in greying wedding lace, cheeky Artful Dodgers running around and a larger than life Vincent Crummles enjoying a fine whisky in the corner, next to the sounding gramophone.

5 Groveland Court EC4M 9EF; 020 7248 5551; thefoursistersbar.co.uk

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COUNTRY STYLE

Smokehouse, already an Islington favourite, will now be rustling up some of the finest meat cuts EC2 has to offer, producing succulent juicy dishes at new launch Little Smoke. Their daily changing menu of beef, pork and lamb dishes will have you licking your lips before you have even sat down. Housed inside a rustic, historic setting, watch as gigantic meat cuts make their way across the restaurant, perfect for sharing.

City Point, 1 Ropemaker Street EC2Y 9AW; 020 3006 6222; littlesmoke.london

FOOD *NOTEBOOK*

Snuggle up inside these cosy food spots

AMERICAN COMFORTS

Get ready for *House of Cards*, Frank Underwood style ribs at Dirty Bones Shoreditch, where classic American waffles and fried chicken drizzled in maple syrup will also be on offer, along with fire breathing cocktails.

1 Club Row E1 6JX; 020 7920 6434; dirty-bones.com

RETRO HONG KONG

Dimply lit, boasting retro post war Chinese aesthetics with flashes of Tom Dixon esque pink and blue flamboyance, Cha Chaan Teng is the new hotspot in town. It was brought to life recently by Chef Jeremy Pang, the brains behind The School of Wok. Their menu is full of traditional and modern Pan Asian dishes, along with a fun cocktail menu inspired by Chinese tea culture.

36-38 Kingsway WC2B 6EY; 0203 876 4001; chachaantenguk.co.uk

HEALTH KICK

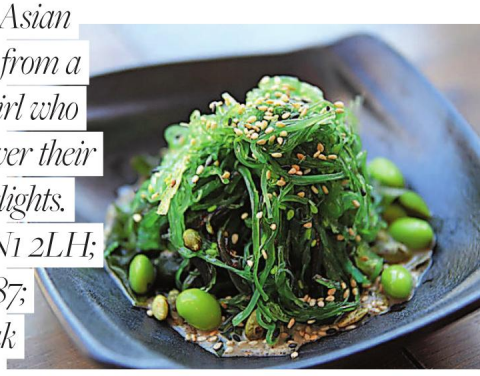
The chefs at Islington's small and colourful Tootoomoo combine ancient cooking techniques with the new. It's hedonistic dining without consequences, indulging in great tasting food with no post meal guilt over your health, because it's just as good for you as it is tasty. The name comes from Asian folklore, specifically from a story to do with a girl who bonds with a giant over their love of culinary delights.

278 St Pauls Road N1 2LH; 020 7704 6687; tootoomoo.co.uk

A RAILWAY GEM

Tucked away at the far end of King's Cross St Pancras, on the top floor, The Betjeman Arms is the ideal spot to grab a spot of lunch and a G&T before or after a long train journey. The decked area creates the illusion of being outside with the help of floods of light shining in from above, with a separate area full of tall arches and plush furnishings, for those who prefer a classic setting.

53 St Pancras International N1C 4QL; 020 7923 5440; thebetjemanarms.co.uk



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Democratic DRINKING

Co-founder of The Sampler, Dawn Mannis is pioneering a modern approach to wine tasting

The Sampler wine tasting shop was set up ten years ago by a two people who wanted to turn their hobby into their full time job. Dawn Mannis and business partner, Jamie Hutchinson have amassed an encyclopaedia of knowledge to do with wines from around the world over the years. Mannis explains: 'At the time we set up The Sampler along Upper Street, there weren't really any businesses using wine sampling machines. We first laid eyes on them when we were on holiday in Italy and thought it would be great if we brought them to London.'

Their ethos is simply, 'try before you buy', offering something for everyone's budget and taste preferences. Traditionally, when purchasing bottles in a wine shop, you simply have to rely on the sales person's advice, which can sometimes leave a hefty hole in your pocket if it's not to your liking once opened. Mannis says: 'It's quite difficult to really gauge what type of wine someone is really looking for if they can't taste it. Some people will come in and say that they want something quite dry, but once they start sampling wines, you realise they like something a bit more sweet.'

She continues: 'This is a very democratic way to sample and purchase. It takes the snobbery out of wine. You can try great wines for under £10, or for £100, or even £800, the customer is in the driving seat.'

Trailblazers in the world of wine and keen to push their contemporary way of experiencing wine, Dawn and Hutchinson started a nationwide wine tasting revolution, with the Italian tasting machines used in their shop now being all the rage. With their innovative streak ever flowing, The Sampler now boasts a range of 1,300 different wines, with this collection changing and growing constantly.

'We change what's in the machines every two weeks to offer variety,' Mannis points out. 'Having a good, robust key range is important but so is offering customers something new, mixing it up and making less well known wines accessible to the ordinary person, keeping things exciting.'

Mannis explains that the wine world has changed immensely in recent years, with a big move towards artisan, niche wineries taking place. Wine expert Mannis says: 'Wine is so diverse now. Irish and Slovakian wines are becoming quite popular at the moment, though you wouldn't expect that traditionally. People travel a lot more also, we are more globally connected and this has sparked a big change in wine preferences.'

Hutchinson and Mannis have caught on to the way Londoners think about wine, recognising that in a city where the food culture is at the top of its game, naturally people are seeking out unique, speciality wines that mirror the fantastic London food offering. The Narnia of the wine sphere, when you step through the door of The Sampler, you open yourself up to a whole new world of wine.

266 Upper Street N1 2UQ; 020 7226 9500; thesampler.co.uk

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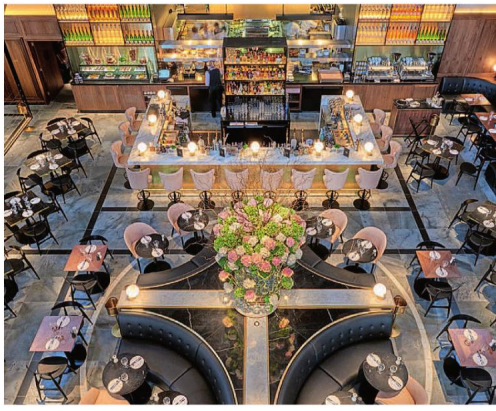

BALANCE & BEAM

The founder of MW5 Fitness discusses the benefit of Victorian exercises as their retro bootcamp at German Gymnasium rolls into November

Words RACHEL MANTOCK

Launched last month, the outdoor bootcamps held by German Gymnasium in collaboration with MW5 Fitness are inspired by old school gym classes. As a nod to the building's history, where the first ever indoor Olympic events were held in 1866, Victorian gymnastics will serve as a main feature of each class. Between 10-11am until 4 December, Martin Whitelock, who heads MW5 Fitness will lead a gruelling session of old fashioned, high intensity drills.

'The morning session will be a mix of Victorian gymnastics, along with modern training techniques also thrown in,' he says. 'This includes classic handstands and forward rolls, along with retro techniques such as Indian clubs, boxing and rope pulls. Incorporating modern variations, like tyre flips, will really get everyone's heart racing.'

From Camden, Whitelock explains that the name 'MW5' began as a throwaway title, as a play on the post code NW5. A seasoned pro, he's been in the fitness industry for 15 years with a background in gymnastics. He now manages all the outdoor fitness activities on the new King's Cross development, including private group training, bootcamps and a running club.

Whitelock describes Indian clubs as looking like 'bowling pins'. The technique needed to use them is quite difficult to master. 'They aren't very sexy either, so they eventually faded from the fitness scene,' he laughs.

Despite their unflattering nature and difficulty, they are exceedingly beneficial for core strength, requiring a huge amount of control and balance.

'Though gym equipment may be shinier and safer today, the idea of maintaining physical fitness spans thousands of years,' Whitelock continues. 'When fitness first became a concept, it was modelled on the movements of animals, dating back as far as 2500BC. It was the German Friedrich Ludwig Jahn who was officially credited as 'the father of gymnastics' in the early 19th century, being praised for designing parallel bars and the balance beam.'

With 'strong not skinny' being a motto that has dominated the fitness industry in recent years, Whitelock is an advocate of this, strength training techniques being a favourite of his. 'Despite what you may have heard, weight training is fantastic for women,' he states. 'Lifting heavy weights burns fat faster than anything else, as well as it being a great way to tone.'

The bold modern day woman is ironically borrowing brutal fitness techniques from the Victorian era, when you would have thought females were seen as too delicate to do anything strenuous. At least you can kick back and indulge in protein rich treats from German Gymnasium after sweating it out.

Classes are £15 each. King's Boulevard N1C 4BU; mw5-fitness.com

GIFTS FROM THE ORIENT

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Green Man Tower, 332a Goswell Road EC1V 7LQ; 020 7837 3643; photai.co.uk

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316 Upper Street N1 2XQ; 020 7704 2262; freshlifestyle.co.uk

HEALTH & BEAUTY NOTEBOOK

Prep your skin for winter in Islington

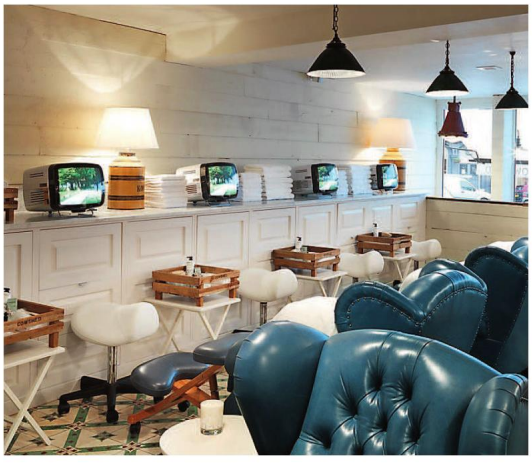
BEAUTY EDITOR'S PICK

Enriched with beeswax butter and two forms of hyaluronic acid, Guerlain's Abeille Royale rich day cream has a luxurious, balmy texture, leaving parched winter skin soft and radiant. Guerlain Abeille Royale Riche Day Cream, £89 for 80 ml at johnlewis.com

Moisture Infusion

As winter nears, it's best to cut down on intense exfoliators, such as glycolic peels and switch to less harsh forms such as enzyme peels. Making sure your skin is packed with moisture and hydrated during the colder months is key, and a calming facial from Shoreditch House's Cowshed will do just that. The gentle treatment soothes inflammation, reduces redness, heals problematic skin and most importantly hydrates, all while you're sat in sumptuous, rustic surroundings.

1 Ebor Street E1 6AW; 020 7749 4531; cowshedonline.com



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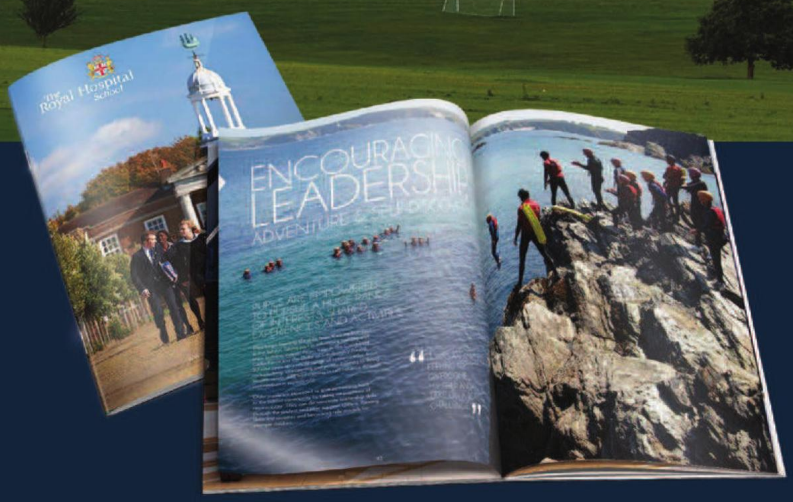

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www.forest.org.uk

Wherever your child may be heading this month, there are ways you can help them to be prepared

FRESH START

Ways to ensure the early days of university life isn't a daunting experience

Words BELLA AUDSLEY

If there's enough room left in the car, soon you may be driving your child – or, we should say, young adult – off to university. Starting university is a milestone, and not just for students – many parents come to us with numerous questions about how to help prepare their children for the next step in their education. Luckily, there are a number of things that you can do to help create a smooth transition for both you as a parent and your newly-fledged 'fresher'.

Starting university often marks a gearshift in a parent's involvement in their children's lives. For some parents, it may be the first time their children are away from home, and the first time their children don't have clear rules on what is and isn't expected of them. As tempting as it may be to dive into your child's extensive reading list or deliver a term's worth of Tupperware meals, sometimes the most valuable support you can provide at this stage is the space for your child to try new things out independently. In our experience, the best preparation for new university students is to arrive as a confident, critical thinker with an inquisitive mind. Independent learning is beneficial on many levels: it can increase motivation and confidence, raise a student's self-awareness of their skills, and has also been linked to improved academic performance. Students who develop these skills early on are able to progress more quickly academically by applying their own ideas to problem solving, forming opinions and creating new learning strategies.

Of course, developing a student's independent learning skills is not about encouraging them to spend a 24-hour stint sitting alone in the library trying to read everything on their reading list. Mirroring the structure of university teaching, one-to-one tuition can offer a supportive and stimulating environment to cultivate these study skills and stretch learning beyond the curriculum. In collaboration with teachers and tutors, parents play a significant role in facilitating the shift of responsibility within the learning process. Whether it is encouraging your child to share their opinion on current affairs over dinner, or suggesting where they could find help with their studies, the careful balance lies in providing just enough support to enable your child to arrive at a resolution autonomously.

Starting university marks a gearshift in a parent's involvement in their child's life

Every parent wants their child to feel confident when navigating the new experiences of university life: from organising their assignments to remembering to separate their washing. Often, providing children with the space to work out these trials for themselves (and to know where to go for help if they cannot), although daunting, allows them to embed in university life more quickly. Have faith that your child's upbringing will hold them in excellent stead and allow them to navigate this exciting new phase with confidence.

Bella Audsley is part of the Enjoy Education team, offering private tuition and schools advice. Find out more at enjoyeducation.co.uk or call 020 7352 8800

Ben Thomas is keen on the arts not being sidelined during a child's educational journey

INSPIRING CONFIDENCE

Ben Thomas, Headmaster of Thomas's in Battersea, on how best to prepare your child for the 11+, 13+, senior school and beyond

Words MADELEINE HOWELL

As the new term gets under way, it's important to ensure your child continues to foster a love of learning beyond exams. For Ben Thomas, who has been the Headmaster at Thomas's in Battersea for 17 years, it's 'a drum that [he] has to bang harder and harder, because of the surge in competition to achieve results'.

In the course of this interview, Thomas expresses his concern over the pressures of the 11+, and suggests that too much focus on box-ticking can be counter-productive. 'The exam reduces everything to English, maths and reasoning, at an age where children's minds ought to be being opened to the wonders of the world, and to the fascinating possibilities of science,' he explains. 'I'm not a huge fan of the 11+ process at all, and I wish we could find a better way.'

For Thomas, the 11+ shouldn't be the 'be all and end all', and passing it should be a by-product of a rounded education, rather than the sole focus. Although children should be practised and confident ('the obvious thing to say is that they should have been drilled endlessly') at the point at which they sit the exam, Thomas stresses that it's also important that they maintain perspective and continue to pursue their interests in other areas like music, art and drama.

'Prep schools have a responsibility not to allow parents to be over-ambitious,' Thomas continues. 'Ideally, there will be children more able than they to give them something to aim for, but also some less able, which will give them the confidence to continue achieving.'

Thomas is much more positive about pre-tests and the 13+ entrance exams, which he feels better reflect a child's individual progress. 'It tends to reflect more accurately our own opinion of a child, whereas with the 11+, you can get very odd results depending on a child's performance on the day,' he says.

It's an age where children's minds ought to be opened to the world's wonders

'There's going to be lots of changes in education,' he continues. 'It will be a luxury to have the time to develop our curriculum to suit the world our children are going to enter. It all feeds back into my obsession with a broad curriculum, and my view that creative endeavours shouldn't be just a sideline.'

Thomas's London Days Schools are based all over the capital. Find out more by visiting thomas-s.co.uk

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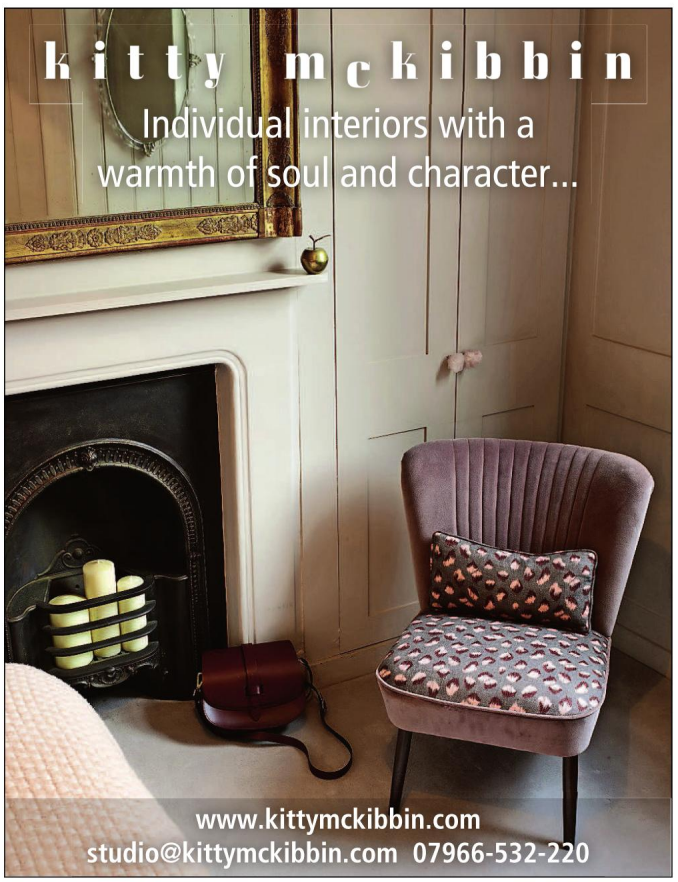

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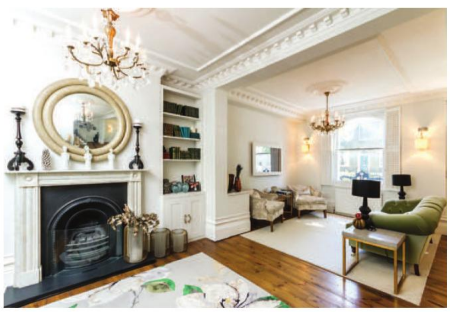

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Barnsbury Street, N1, is on the market for £1,100,000 with Fyfe McDade. For more information, call 020 7354 4040 or visit fyfemcdade.com

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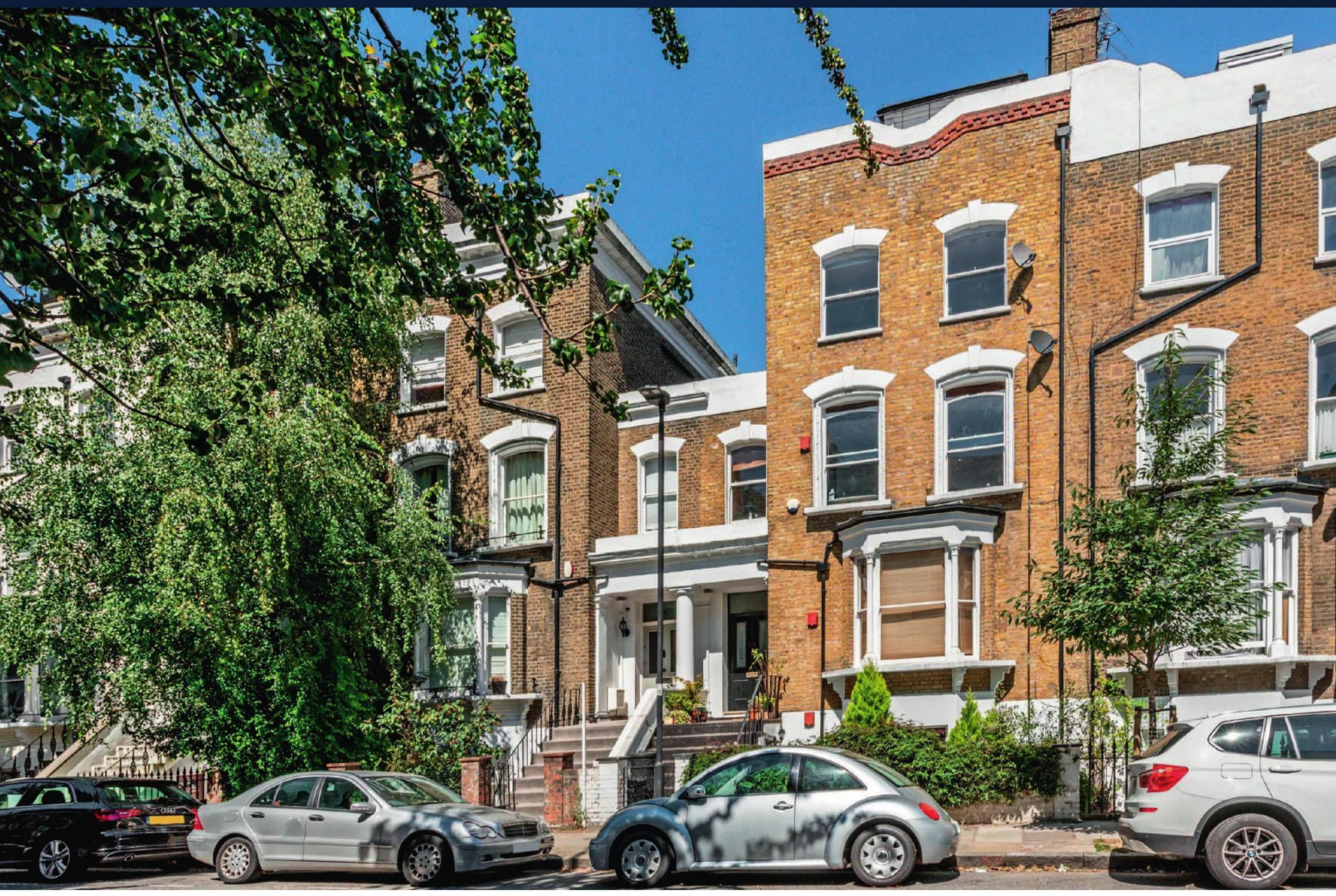

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